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Mann Seen Overruled On Panama

Latin Leaders Feel Johnson Frustrated Mediation Efforts

By Dan Kurzman
Staff Reporter

President Johnson appears to have overruled the views of the State Department and his chief adviser on Latin America on the handling of the Panama Canal dispute, U.S. sources said yesterday.

The differences were voiced Sunday night at an emergency White House meeting attended by Rusk, U.S. sources said, directed by Secretary of State Dean not fully support President Rusk and Latin Affairs adviser Thomas C. Mann, who is also Assistant Secretary of State.

The conference was called after the special Panama committee of the Organization of American States said it would hold a press conference to announce that a preliminary agreement between the United States and Panama had been reached on the Canal issue.

The apparent conflict with the Government came to light as an OAS committee announced that President Johnson's attitude appeared to have been a rebuttal of the agreement it said was approved by Mann.

Is Asked to Continue

The committee said it had tried and failed to resolve the 10-week-old dispute. However, the full, 17-nation OAS General Commission, which has been empowered to look into the dispute under provisions of the Inter-American Treaty of Mutual Assistance, met last night and after approving the committee's report, asked it to continue its mediation effort. The five-man committee agreed.

The White House and State Department declined to comment on the reported division of opinion between the White House and State Department.

Rusk and Mann are understood to have advocated "softer" position toward the committee's announcement of an agreement than did President Johnson. Mann, in any event, agreed in principle to the OAS announcement early on Sunday in conversations with committee members, according to these members.

Delay Preferred

The President, however, talked with Mann on Sunday afternoon, and apparently frowned on the OAS plan. As a result, Mann told the committee just before the press conference was held that the U.S. preferred to delay the announcement. Committee members, however, say, in the face of U.S. denials, that he indicated the U.S. would not oppose an immediate announcement.

Some reports indicate that Sunday night at an emergency White House meeting attended by Rusk, U.S. sources said, did not fully support President Johnson's view that the U.S. visor Thomas C. Mann, who is also Assistant Secretary of State.

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These were examples, he apparently felt, of what could be expected unless Panama made it clear from the beginning that the U.S. had not committed itself in advance to such renegotiation. He wanted to make this to be made clear in interpretative statements by both countries that would accompany the written agreement.

Later, both Foreign Minister Galileo Solis and Panamanian Ambassador Miguel J. Moreno denied reports that they had made the controversial demands cited by U.S. sources.

At any rate, Mann, in the eyes of many Latin officials, has emerged as a more "liberal" and "understanding" diplomat than he had been considered previously. The President's image, on the other hand, has deteriorated considerably.

OAS officials charge that the President added insult to injury when, at the OAS Council meeting, which was intended to stress the need for greater hemispheric cooperation, Mr. Johnson committed itself in advance to such renegotiation. He wanted to make this to be made clear in interpretative statements by both countries that would accompany the written agreement.